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White House Shakes Up Vast Intelligence-Gathering Network

CIA's Helms Seen Possible Czar, Pentagon's Agency
Downgraded as Kissinger and Staff Receive New Powers

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WASHINGTON -- The White House announced Friday a shakeup of the government's massive intelligence bureaucracy that could have major import in enabling the President to assess more accurately any Soviet threat to the United States.

Richard Helms, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, emerges from the long-planned reorganization as an even stronger figure with responsibility for coordinating all intelligence activities. Some sources said Helms' role could develop into that of an intelligence czar.

Henry A. Kissinger, President Nixon's assistant for national security affairs, and the National Security Council staff also are given significant new powers in the shakeup.

Budget-Clearing Procedure

The Pentagon's high Defense Intelligence Agency is downgraded and will be required, along with other intelligence arms of the government, to clear its budget through a new Intelligence Resources Advisory Committee chaired by Helms.

Informed sources said the shakeup reflected the President's unhappiness with the quality of information supplied him on occasion and his belief that the splintered intelligence activities can be coordinated better.

The President also is convinced, it was said, that the government's intelligence bill -- reliably estimated at about \$5 billion a year now -- is unnecessarily high. Administration officials hope to achieve a saving of at least several hundred million dollars along with greater efficiency.

For years many in Congress and in the executive branch have thought that the government's intelligence effort, because of growth of staff and fragmentation among various agencies, was becoming unmanageable and that the cost was getting out of hand.

The studies that led to Friday's announcement were launched secretly by the National Security

Council more than a year ago.

A major change, which for the first time will give the White House the expert capability to make its own intelligence evaluation of such strategic problems as the Soviet missile threat, is the establishment of the Net Assessment Group within the National Security Council staff.

The group will be headed by a senior staff member. A White House source said that job would go to Andrew W. Marshall, now director of strategic studies at the Rand Corp. in Santa Monica.

The different interpretations that the Pentagon and the CIA have given to the construction of about 90 missile silos in the Soviet Union is expected to be one of the first strategic policy problems to be put before the NAG.

The size of the defense budget and the strategic arms limitation talks with the Russians could be affected by whatever decision the President finally makes regarding the purpose of those still-empty silos.

Pentagon analysts have tended to a more alarmist reading of the silo construction, suggesting the Russians may be developing a new weapons system for offensive purposes.

While not ruling out that possibility, the CIA, it is understood, tends to the view that the silos are designed primarily to afford greater protection for missiles already in being and are therefore defensive.

Thus, where differences arise in the intelligence community on strategic questions, the NAG would be expected to reduce such disputes to manageable proportions for the President.

Helms' strengthened position will derive in large measure from his new authority over what the White House described as a "consolidated intelligence program budget."

Never before has there been a single intelligence budget. Under the present system each agency engaged in intelligence work submits its own budget request to the White House.

Under the reorganization the budget requests will go to the committee chaired by Helms and whose membership will include representatives of the State and Defense departments and the Office of Management and Budget.

Also among the "major management improvements" announced by the White House were:

"An enhanced leadership role" for the director of central intelligence (Helms) in "planning, reviewing, coordinating and evaluating all intelligence programs and activities, and in the production of national intelligence."

Establishment of a National Security Council Intelligence Committee, chaired by the President's national security assistant (Kissinger), whose membership will include the attorney general, the director of central intelligence, the undersecretary of state, the deputy secretary of defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

That committee is to "give direction and guidance on national intelligence needs and provide for a continuing evaluation of intelligence products from the viewpoint of the intelligence user."

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